

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District
95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945
PHONE: (415) 878-2690 FAX: (415) 878-2660
WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG

Draft: 4/11/13

PROJECT OVERSIGHT SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MARCH 29, 2013

A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 a.m. on March 29, 2013 in Marin Civic Center, Room 315, San Rafael, CA.

Subcommittee Members Present:

Central Marin Police Authority	Todd Cusimano
Marin County Sheriff	Robert Doyle
Town of Ross	Tom Gaffney
County of Marin	Matthew Hymel
Marin Transit	David Rzepinski
City of Sausalito	Jennifer Tejada

Subcommittee Members Absent:

City of Larkspur	Robert Sinnott
City of Novato	Jim Berg
City of San Rafael	Diana Bishop

Staff Present:

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
MERA Operations Officer	Craig Tackabery
MERA General Counsel	Jim Karpiak

Guests Present:

Indie Politics/Price Campaign Solutions	Dan Mullen, Terry Price
FM3	Curt Below

B. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

M/S/P Doyle/Gaffney to appoint Cusimano and Sinnott as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

AYES: All
NAYS: None
Motion carried.

C. Approval of Outreach Subcommittee Minutes from January 8, 2013 Meeting

M/S/P Cusimano/Doyle to accept the minutes from the January 8, 2013 meeting as presented.

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: Gaffney, Hymel, Rzepinski and Tejada

Motion carried.

D. Post-Mortem: January 16 Governing and Executive Boards' Workshop

Cassingham said she prepared a list of audience questions from the Workshop to be addressed in future educational communications. Tackabery said DPW is working with Stinson in the field on their coverage issues and has reached out to Inverness to provide preventive maintenance on all their radios. The Coverage Committee is continuing its review of these matters along with developing recommendations to the Executive Board in May. Rzepinski said the Stinson representative said MERA had not been working for them and the Inverness representative held up a pager as their means of communicating. Doyle said MERA does work in Stinson but not everywhere like the deep canyons between Stinson and Muir Beach.

E. Report from FM3 – MERA Public Opinion Survey

Price introduced Below, FM3 Vice President, and his PowerPoint presentation entitled “Funding Marin Emergency Radio Authority’s Next Generation System: Findings from a Recent Survey”. Below distributed copies to the Subcommittee members. He began with the survey methodology based on 601 phone interviews of Marin County voters likely to vote in the November 2014 election. The survey produced five key findings including 58% support for a \$45 parcel tax to fund the Next Gen System, which improved to 64% when more information about the measure was provided. FM3 did a like survey in Santa Clara County which produced similar results. In both areas, emergency communications is not a top-of-the-mind issue. While the level of support is within striking distance, much more work needs to be done to educate voters.

Below said the survey found most voters feeling that things in Marin County are headed in the right direction and that they had a very favorable opinion of local police, sheriff and fire departments but little awareness of MERA. He noted a 50/50 split on concern about the maintenance of communications during an emergency. MERA needs to work on “urgency” in an emergency. He reviewed the hypothetical ballot language tested, which included the \$45 annual tax for 20 years and resulted in a majority of voter support but falling short of 2/3. Hymel asked about the “Probably Yes” responses and to what extent they should be discounted. Below said it depends on the issue. The definites need to exceed the probables and definite no’s. Gaffney asked if the reference to MERA in the ballot language can be removed since no one knows about MERA. Mullen said we were testing for “MERA” and other elements like “reliable communications”. More research needs to be done on this as to whether we can use “Marin County” only or “Marin

County on behalf of Marin County residents”, or “all police and fire departments in the County”. Gaffney favored using Marin County because of its bond rating.

Below reviewed the demographic slides including voting by gender, age, party, party by gender, gender by age and voter income. Generally, support decreases with age, women tend to be more supportive than men and younger women tend to be most supportive. By Supervisor District, support is somewhat higher in District 2 but generally consistent across the County.

Mullen commented on voters who are somewhat concerned about communications in an emergency being only mildly supportive of the measure and thus do not share our urgency. This is where we need to educate. There is a fine line between scaring voters and creating a sense of urgency. Below said whether the system is up to date is not as important as reliability.

Below said the survey found little difference in voter response between a June and November 2014 election. Support is greater among lower propensity voters when self-reported or based on their voting histories. He said there may be a slight benefit to MERA using November and this could be critical to the 2/3 threshold.

Relative to the amount of the proposed parcel tax, the survey found a lower parcel tax, such as \$25 per year, yields greater and more intense support. Other methods of generating revenue, such as a G.O. Bond or 1/8-cent sales tax for 12 years, yielded little voter support. Including a citizens’ oversight committee garnered more support than reducing the term of the parcel tax from 20 to 15 years. Mullen said voters are not looking at the length of the tax.

Below said respondents were told about the ways the tax could be spent and related benefits. Voters valued the benefits of reliability and reduced response times and were less interested in how the benefits would be achieved. Hymel said these are the core benefits of the replacement project. Gaffney and Mullen noted that any regional benefit was of less interest. Mullen said future messaging will feature the key benefits. Doyle noted that reliability trumps the other benefits.

Below described voter reaction to the pro and con arguments in the survey as making little difference in changing their minds. He reviewed the electorate segments of consistent yes’s and no’s and the swing vote who changed their vote or were consistently undecided. He also described the demographic profile of these segments. Hymel said we need 80% of the 22% swing to be successful. Below said there are subsets of persuadable voters. Hymel asked if a cross analysis of the swing vote could be done based on a price sensitivity. Below will follow up. Mullen noted that very conservative swing voters tend to turn into no’s. Below discussed the subsets of persuadable voters and positive movers after explanation and negative movers after pros and cons. Positive movers included natural-disaster high-volume communications, day-to-day emergency use and restriction of tax to capital expenditures. Negative movers included federal regulations, system lifespan, technology changes and existing system successful

partnership which connotes “process”. Below summarized that referencing existing partnerships, new technology and federal regulations may actually reduce support.

Doyle asked, given the high support for police and fire, whether their endorsements would help the measure. Mullen and Below said absolutely. Hymel encouraged more review of the amount of the tax by the Finance Committee. Possibly a lower amount could be indexed to the CPI. He asked if this could increase support. Below said this would not be a positive but could be included. Gaffney added we also need to confirm how many parcels we have, which would affect the amount. Mullen said, while willingness to pay is an important factor, more important is assuring there is no internal dissent. Price added, concerns may arise about retiring current bonds and funds spent on preparing for the ballot measure. He said the project budget must be precise, assure the best options have been considered and thoroughly vetted with the members. Doyle inquired about the possibility of organized opposition to the measure. Mullen said given the 2/3 threshold, opposition does not have to be that organized. Doyle noted the recent great support for open space. Mullen reiterated the need for local police and fire support up through the election.

Price discussed next steps with the poll. Baseline results have fleshed out areas to be addressed and helped to better define messaging. More focus is needed on swing voters. The next survey is pushed later in the process for more accuracy. We need to resolve the dollar amount as soon as possible for presentation to member agencies. Mullen said the next poll is scheduled for early 2014. Gaffney said the parcel study will be a big help with this plus tightening the project budget and whether we include 5,000 radios versus the 3,000 current radios.

Price said the poll PPT will be modified for presentations to members, especially related to length and amount of detail. In between, Supervisor Kinsey will be asked to view the current presentation for his input. Fact sheets and FAQs will also be revised with PPT information.

F. Member Outreach Update

In response to Tackabery’s suggestion to add more fire representatives on the Subcommittee, Price mentioned Deputy Chief Mark Brown. Tejada said to follow up with NFPD. Cusimano and Cassingham will reach out to County Fire Chief Weber and Chief Massucco, respectively, to be part of the Subcommittee.

Price distributed the first draft of the MERA member newsletter. He needs 3-4 volunteers to review it. The Newsletter would have no set schedule and would feature current and upcoming major activities and events. He said distribution would be to everyone on MERA’s current lists plus all other member elected and appointed officials. The temporary Special Project Administrative Assistant is developing the database. Cusimano, Tejada, Cassingham and Tackabery volunteered to help. Price clarified that it is not intended for the public to subscribe. He stressed the need for more action photos for the Newsletter and other communications.

Price and Mullen are meeting with Jerry Kay regarding updating the video within the next few weeks for public presentation. Mullen said they were also working on updating the Outreach Plan timeline for the Subcommittee's April meeting. Cusimano noted a presentation will be made by him, Captain Jeffries and Chief Brown at the April MCCMC meeting on County emergency services, possibly including a MERA general update.

G. Update on Special Project Recruitments

Cassingham discussed the updated job descriptions for the part-time Special Project Manager and Administrative Assistant. She thanked members for their help in identifying 3-4 excellent candidates. An interview panel of 3 from the Subcommittee has been set for April 23, including Sheriff Doyle and Chiefs Cusimano and Tejada. Interview questions have been developed and résumés obtained for distribution. The selected candidate will be employed by contract with RGS. The AA position will also be via contract with RGS. The temporary AA and other candidates provided by RGS will be interviewed by the SP Manager and Executive Officer.

H. Preparation for Next Gen System Project Ballot Measure

Karpiak reported on two legal topics that have arisen. One is how to formalize the relationship between the County and MERA regarding the Next Gen project and the second is CEQA.. He has conferred with County Counsel and Tackabery on both issues, which are interrelated. Ultimately, the County Board will have to put the measure on the ballot and MERA will need an operations agreement with the County to operate the replacement system. CEQA compliance will be needed before final decisions are made on the project. At this point, planning activities are exempt from CEQA.. As part of the planning process, an MOU should be negotiated with the County for approval by the MERA and County Boards to document a conceptual buy-in between the entities.

On CEQA, recent case law has confirmed that full environmental analysis is not required to put a measure on the ballot under certain circumstances, and the County did not undertake a full CEQA analysis before putting its transportation and open space measures on the ballot. Karpiak said that the goal should be to fashion a ballot measure that complies with the case law to allow full, costly environmental review to be deferred until after the ballot measure passes, assuming it does. Tackabery said if voters approve the measure, a full CEQA analysis would take 12-18 months and cost an estimated \$200,000 - \$500,000. Discussion ensued about expending public funds before voter approval. Tackabery noted that our outreach efforts will give us feedback on this. Also, the final EIR for Tiburon is under review now and should be certified soon.

I. Annual Review of MERA Strategic Plan

Cassingham and Tackabery will present the Plan update to the Subcommittee in April.

J. Pre-Ballot Measure Meeting Schedule – Executive and Governing Boards

Cassingham will develop a more detailed schedule for upcoming Next Gen Project notifications and actions that will require Executive and Governing Board approval. Karpiak, Price, Mullen and Bond Counsel will provide input accordingly.

K. Other Information Items

Price suggested that public and media inquiries be referred to the Executive Officer for follow-up as she is MERA's designated spokesperson. He and Mullen will assist with responses as needed. Cassingham will communicate this protocol to all Subcommittee members.

L. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next Subcommittee meeting be scheduled at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, April 24, 2013, at the Marin Civic Center in a room to be determined.

M. Open Time for Items Not on Agenda

None.

N. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.